Conference on Disarmament

21 February 2018

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Note verbale dated 22 August 2017 from the Permanent Mission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, in its capacity as the Coordinator for the Group of 21, to the Secretariat of the Conference of Disarmament transmitting the G-21 Working paper on Follow-up to the 2013 High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament

The Permanent Mission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its complements to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament, and in its capacity as the Coordinator for the Group of 21, has the honour to submit herewith the G-21 Working paper on Follow-up to the 2013 High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament.

On behalf of the Group of 21, the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka requests that the document be issued as an official Working paper of the Conference on Disarmament for the year 2017.

The Permanent Mission of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament the assurance of its highest consideration.

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Follow-up to the 2013 High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament

1. The strong support of the international community for taking urgent and effective measures to achieve the total elimination of nuclear weapons was amply demonstrated at High-level meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament held on 26 September 2013, when Heads of State and Government, Foreign Ministers, and other high-level or senior government officials expressed their unambiguous position and policies for nuclear disarmament, in response to the decision adopted in the General Assembly resolution 67/39.

2. Subsequent to this High Level Meeting, the General Assembly adopted resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34 and 71/71 titled "Follow-up to the 2013 High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on Nuclear Disarmament". These resolutions called for the urgent commencement of negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament for the early conclusion of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

3. The resolutions also requested the Secretary General to seek the views of Members States with regard to achieving the objective of the total elimination of nuclear weapons, in particular on the elements of a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons, and to submit a report thereon to the General Assembly, and the Conference on Disarmament.

4. The General Assembly also decided to convene a United Nations high-level international conference on nuclear disarmament no later than 2018 to review progress made in this regard.

5. The Group stresses the importance of the commemoration, of the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons, which falls on 26 of September. In this regard, the Group expresses its appreciation to Member States, the United Nations system and civil society, including non-governmental organizations, academia, parliamentarians, the mass media and individuals that developed activities in promotion of this International Day, through all means of educational and public awareness-raising activities about the threat posed to humanity by nuclear weapons and the necessity for their total elimination, in order to mobilize international efforts towards achieving the common goal of a nuclear-weapon-free world. The Group invites all stakeholders to continuously promote the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.

6. The Group welcomes the formal proclamation of Latin America and the Caribbean as Zone of Peace, on the occasion of the Second Summit of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC), held in La Habana, Cuba, on 28–29 January 2014. The 33 member countries of CELAC declare to promote nuclear disarmament as a priority goal as part of the progress towards general and complete disarmament, in order to promote the strengthening of trust among nations. CELAC once again reiterates its standing commitment to continue working for Latin America and the Caribbean remains and be strengthened as a Zone of Peace, thereby contributing to regional and international security.

7. The persistent existence of nuclear weapons poses a grave threat to humanity and all life on Earth, and the only defence against the catastrophic humanitarian consequences of a nuclear detonation is the total and irreversible legally binding elimination of nuclear weapons and the maintenance of a nuclear weapon free world.

8. Nuclear disarmament is the highest priority of the CD. The Group reaffirms that the total elimination of nuclear weapons is the only absolute guarantee against their use or threat of use. The fulfilment of nuclear disarmament obligations and commitments would mutually reinforce non-proliferation. Nuclear disarmament has to be pursued in a comprehensive and non-discriminatory manner.

9. The Group of 21 is mindful of the solemn obligations of States parties, undertaken in article VI of the NPT, particularly to pursue negotiations in good faith on effective

measures relating to cessation of the nuclear arms race at an early date and to nuclear disarmament and calls for urgent compliance with the legal obligation of the fulfilment of the commitments undertaken in this field.

10. The Group acknowledges the significant contribution made by a number of countries towards realizing the objective of nuclear disarmament through the establishment of nuclear weapons free zones, as well as by voluntary renunciation of nuclear weapons programmes or withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from their territories, and strongly supporting the speedy establishment of a nuclear weapons free zone in the Middle East.

11. The Group is deeply concerned by the persistent reluctance of nuclear weapons states to approach their treaty obligation as an urgent commitment to the total elimination of their nuclear weapons by providing pretexts unacceptable due to the urgency of making concrete actions to avert the adverse consequences of nuclear weapons.

12. In this connection, the Group recalls the unanimous conclusion of the International Court of Justice in its 1996 Advisory Opinion that there exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to conclusion the negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control.

13. It is the firm belief of the Group that the time has come to words into action. Accordingly, the Group of 21 takes this opportunity to call for the implementation of UNGA resolutions 68/32, 69/58, 70/34 and 71/71. In this connection, the Group of 21 calls for the urgent commencement of negotiations on nuclear disarmament in the CD, in particular on a comprehensive convention on nuclear weapons to prohibit their possession, development, production, acquisition, testing, stockpiling, transfer, use or threat of use and to provide for their destruction.

14. The Group takes note of the adoption of the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons on July 7th 2017 at the United Nations conference to negotiate a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, pursuant to UNGA resolution 71/258 held in New York from 27 to 31 March and 15 June to 7 July 2017. The Group hopes that this instrument would contribute to furthering nuclear disarmament leading towards the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

15. The Group therefore requests, the Presidency of the Conference, to take into account in your on-going consultations, how to take forward the mandate given to the CD by the UN General Assembly on this important issue, and call upon Members of the Conference to support this important initiative.